



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE BOATING LAW ADMINISTRATORS

MEDIA RELEASE

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NASBLA issues advisory for used boat buyers

May 23, 2006 -- Hurricanes Katrina and Rita may continue to cause devastation well into the 2006 boating season, warns the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA).

Due to the hurricanes in 2005 many boats were damaged or destroyed. Boat Owners Association of the United States estimates that damages to recreational vessels as a result of Hurricane Katrina alone are between \$650 and \$750 million. Some of these boats are being sold as merely "used" to unsuspecting buyers.

"Sadly, unethical people are everywhere, even in times of disaster," said Rick Barrera, chairman of NASBLA's Numbering & Titling Committee. "Used boat buyers should take precautions to protect themselves down the road," he said. Of the states that require titling, fewer than 10 require titles of boats that have been totaled to be marked "salvaged."

Consumers, boating registration personnel and others can utilize a database of watercraft affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita developed by the National Insurance Crime Bureau (NICB).

According to the NICB, by March 2006, there were 206,000 vehicles in its flooded motor vehicle and boat database. The NICB warns that flooded vessels may be cleaned up, moved and sold in other areas of the country by unscrupulous operators. Although the vessels were totaled by insurance companies and some are identified with the word "salvage" on their titles (meaning that they are not fit for any use except for scrap or parts), they could end up on the market in states where it is relatively easy to apply for a new title.

If a consumer buys one of these boats, they could be in for a surprise that could prove costly.

NASBLA encourages boat buyers to check out the history of any used vessel they may purchase. They can do this by searching the NICB database for watercraft affected by the hurricanes.

To access the database go to www.nicb.org and enter the hull identification number (HIN) of the boat you are buying. The HIN can be found on the right rear of the watercraft hull. While not all vessels scraped for salvage are in the database, it is one tool consumers can use to help lessen the chance of fraud.

Barrera said, "If a deal on a boat sounds too good to be true, most times it is. Take a few extra steps and make sure the vessel you are buying is legitimate and will provide a safe and enjoyable experience for you and your family."

The National Association of State Boating Law Administrators is a non-profit organization comprised of state and territorial recreational boating authorities. NASBLA fosters partnerships among the states, the Coast Guard and others, crafts model boating laws, maintains national education and training standards, assists in the homeland security challenges on our waterways, and advocates the needs of the state boating programs before Congress and federal agencies.

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